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THE CHURCH'S MISSION OF RECONCILIATION.

BY

JOHN COTTON SMITH.

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THE CHURCH'S MISSION OF RECONCILIATION.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE EASTERN CONVOCATION
OF MASSACHUSETTS,

AT

IPSWICH, SEPT. 18, 1879,

BY

THE REV. JOHN COTTON SMITH, D.D.,
RECTOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION,
CITY OF NEW YORK.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE CONVOCATION.

NEW YORK:
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LETTERS.

To the Rev. John Cotton Smith, D.D.

Rev. and Dear Brother: By vote of the members of the Eastern Convocation of the Diocese of Massachusetts, the undersigned were appointed a committee to request the publication of the sermon you delivered before them to-day in the Church of the Ascension, Ipswich.

We listened with great pleasure to the expression of your views as to the mission of our Church in reconciling differences, and think the dissemination of such views would do much toward giving comfort to minds now disquieted by doubts and difficulties.

We regret that the time usually devoted to the delivery of a sermon did not permit you to develop one important point you indicated in outline—viz.: "Our Church's relationship to other bodies of Christians." We beg to suggest that such a topic is one of especial importance at this time, and that whatever will aid in bringing together the scattered members of Christ's flock will receive the serious consideration of many who now lament our unhappy divisions.

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Thanking you for the pleasure and the instruction you have given us, and asking for our brethren the opportunity to enjoy your sermon as we did, we remain

Very truly your friends,

GEORGE W. SHINN,
LOUIS DE CORMIS,
BRYAN B. KILLIKELLY.

IPSWICH, MASS., September 18, 1879.

To the Rev. Messrs. George W. Shinn, Louis De Cormis, Bryan B. Killikelly, Committee, etc.

REV. AND DEAR BRETHREN: It gives me pleasure to comply with the request of the Eastern Convocation of Massachusetts for the publication of my sermon on "The Church's Mission of Reconciliation."

Very sincerely yours,

JOHN COTTON SMITH.

NEW YORK, ASCENSION RECTORY,
October 1st, 1879.

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THE

Church's Mission of Reconciliation.

I SHOULD show but a poor appreciation of the privilege of addressing so many of my brethren of the clergy did I not endeavor to say something which may be helpful and encouraging to us in our special work. In seeking to do this, my thoughts have been guided by that wonderful declaration of St. Paul which is found in 2 Cor. 5 : 18—"HE HATH COMMITTED TO US THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION."

If in the treatment of the subject I shall speak of reconciliations in the kingdom of Christ other than the first great reconciliation of the soul to God, it is certainly not because I fail to realize the transcendent importance of that the primary aspect of the subject, but be-

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cause through these other reconciliations, of which I shall speak, there is present always the underlying idea of reconciliation to God.

I cannot resist the conviction that a special mission of reconciliation now presents itself to the PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH. This conviction is the result of a consideration of certain peculiarities of our own time, and of the attitude in regard to them which this Church is capable of assuming. These peculiarities it is not difficult to recognize. They are for the most part the results of a transition in society from an old to a new order of things. At no period in the history of the world has there been so eager and persistent a questioning of every thing that claims authority over the human mind, and such restlessness under established institutions. The process so far has been chiefly disintegrating and destructive. The great conservative and constructive forces upon which the welfare of society depends have not yet specially asserted themselves. To the mind which has well considered the divine purpose as it has

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unfolded itself in history there are openings in the clouds through which we can catch glimpses of the light of the coming order and peace; there are many voices which promise the final reconciliation of the antagonisms which now disquiet the world. But the prevailing aspect is that of confusion, uncertainty, and doubt; and venerable institutions of Church and State, and old opinions and philosophies, and ancient modes of faith, seem to be shaken to their very foundations.

It is impossible that this state of things can long continue. The human mind very soon rebels against a mere negative condition; and positive institutions and beliefs, of some kind, are sure to emerge from the present dreary waste. The problem which presents itself, and is sure to be more or less satisfactorily solved, is to discriminate between what is transient and what is permanent in human life and society; to determine what can safely be thrown aside as dangerous or obsolete, and what must be retained as essential; what are the mere fleeting prejudices of mankind, and

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what are, if there are any such, immutable and eternal truths.

In order to a satisfactory solution of this problem there must be a reconciliation of various antagonistic elements in society. In considering the mission of our own Church in regard to this work of reconciliation, we are left to inquire:

I. What Christian Church stands in the most favorable position for this work?

II. How can men alienated from Christianity by speculative difficulties be reconciled to the Church?

III. Upon what principles can a reconciliation of various Christian bodies be brought about?

IV. How can the antagonisms in our own Church best be reconciled?

I. There is a phenomenon, in our time, which is well worthy of our consideration, and that is a tendency to a return to the Church of Rome. I do not now refer to the Tractarian and Rit-

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ualistic movement, however much that may have brought about a different feeling in regard to some of the peculiarities of that Church. I refer now to a sympathy which is springing up for the Church of Rome in quarters where perhaps it would least be expected, and where its existence is of very great significance. No one can have failed to notice the altered tone, of late years, in regard to this subject. The bitterness of earlier controversies seems in a great measure to have passed away. Educated men generally are inclined to admit that the Church of Rome has played an important part in history, in the preservation of civilization and in the maintenance of a spiritual order in society. Political considerations, especially in Germany, are bringing about a different attitude toward the Papacy. Prince Bismarck seeks the alliance of his old enemies against new and more dangerous foes. The policy of Leo XIII. seems to be likely to be conciliatory, and to adapt itself to some of the most deeply-felt wants of the age. There are many men who are tired of mere individualism, are op-

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pressed with the confusion in which free inquiry has resulted, and, in the reaction which has followed, long for some venerable authority to which they can submit themselves. In this state of mind they welcome the most astounding claims of the Church of Rome. If science has driven them, as they think, to a doubt of immortality and a denial of the possibility of knowledge of God, then, in despair of finding a religion which can be reconciled with reason, they embrace one which proudly sets reason at defiance. And, more than this, there are timid men, in all our churches, who, distrusting their own conclusions and alarmed at the confusion which prevails, are glad to recognize a great institution which claims to think for them, and demands of them only that they shall believe and obey. Various influences combine to give strength to a movement which tends toward authority, unity, and positiveness in religious institutions. The certain end of such a movement, unless it can find itself elsewhere satisfied, is in the Church of Rome.

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What is needed, in order to meet most beneficently the peculiar wants of the present day, is the authority which belongs to catholic truth and historical continuity in an institution which is in sympathy with freedom and progress; which encourages scientific inquiry; which recognizes the right and responsibility of private judgment; and which testifies, with no doubtful voice, to the fundamental truths of a personal God, a divine and redeeming Christ, and a personal immortality for man.

It is a principle common to all forms of Christianity, outside of the Church of Rome, that there is not, and cannot be, any visible head of the Church on earth. The idea, therefore, of an universal empire, with any one on earth representing the headship of Christ, is that very feature of the Papal system which all the rest of Christendom rejects. The reconciliation of the non-Christian elements in society to Christianity, and of the Christian elements into a new unity, would naturally, therefore, take form in national churches, with a com-

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mon faith and rites of worship, and in communion with each other.

One of the most striking features in the history of Christianity has been the existence of national establishments, constituted by a union of Church and State. The tendency in our own time is strongly in the direction of disestablishment and the independence of all relations of the State on the one hand, and the Church on the other. Whether this is to be a permanent tendency, or whether it is altogether a salutary one, may be a question. There are many indications that the tendency may be indefinitely resisted by the Church of England. And when we remember the grand history of that institution, and see how it has its roots everywhere in the social and domestic life of the people, and how beneficently it is now gathering all the best interests of the nation under its protecting shade, we cannot regard its preservation as a national establishment otherwise than with gratitude and joy. But where established churches do not exist, there is no present prospect that they ever will

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exist. Relations which were formerly compulsory are more and more becoming voluntary, and churches in the future, if they are to become in any sense national, must become so because they are the best expression of the religious life of the nation, and are accepted by the people as such.

I am proceeding on the supposition that the mission of reconciliation cannot be satisfactorily accomplished—that is, that modern thought and progress cannot be reconciled with Christianity, and different forms of Christianity cannot be reconciled with each other, unless our Protestant Christendom is unified upon the basis of the historic faith, and organized into institutions which, in the sense already laid down, shall be National Churches.

It is vain to say that the same power can be secured and the same desirable results accomplished by the co-existence of various societies, independent of each other, and each claiming to present some special aspect of Christianity. When we consider what the religion of Christ is, the attitude of these various

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Christian bodies toward each other presents a deplorable spectacle. The work of the Church of Christ in the world is carried on at the most tremendous disadvantage and with the most needless sacrifice of influence and means. It is probably no exaggeration to say that as much of the energy of Christian men is absorbed in attacking other forms of Christianity and defending their own as in efforts for the conversion of the world. It is time that this condition of things should come to an end, and that men should labor for some form of Christianity which shall win to itself the allegiance of Christian people, and become, not by civil compulsion, but by voluntary acceptance, the Church of the nation.

The highest ideal of the Church of the future is, of course, the manifestation to the world of the organic unity of all Christian people. When we speak of "organic unity" we mean, of course, the unity which belongs to and is manifested by a body animated by one vitalizing principle. This is true, to some extent, of the Church regarded as the "blessed

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company of all faithful people." But this unity is comparatively powerless because there is little consciousness of it in the body itself, and because there is almost an entire absence of any external manifestation. This divided and segregated state, in which there is so little consciousness or manifestation of unity, is the result of wrong opinions, wrong feelings, and lack of spiritual directness and power. It has been profoundly said that "vice separates men, while virtue unites them," and it is the "vice" of the Christian community—that is, the defective moral and spiritual sense—which keeps the faithful in Christ Jesus from the aspiration and realization of unity.

I have said that this organic unity of all Christian people is the highest ideal of the Church of the future. The full realization of this in the sense of any manifestation of unity, including all the great branches into which Christendom is divided, is so remote from any present indications as hardly to encourage any practical effort. But the opportunity certainly lies open to us to labor for reconcilia-

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tion and unity, with confident hopes of success, within certain limits, and in certain relations which we are abundantly able to reach and affect. It may be well at the same time to remember that the larger realization of an all-embracing unity has been regarded by some of the profoundest thinkers of this century as something to be directly labored for, and the Anglican Church as the great agency by which it is to be accomplished. Most remarkable in this respect is the testimony of Count Joseph de Maistre, one of the most celebrated writers of the ultramontane school in the Church of Rome. Notwithstanding the natural prejudices of his ecclesiastical position, he says, in his "Considerations sur la France," that if Christians are to be drawn together it would seem that the impulse must proceed from the Church of England.* With such a testi-

* "Si jamais les Chrétiens se rapprochent, comme tout les y invite, il semble que la motion doit partir de l'église d'Angleterre. Le presbytérienisme fut une œuvre française, et par conséquent une œuvre exagerée. Nous sommes trop éloignés des sectateurs d'un culte trop peu substantiel; il n'y a pas moyen de nous entendre. Mais

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mony, from such a source, it may not be unsuitable for us to feel that there is confided to the Protestant Episcopal Church, which has the same faith and order as the Church of England, a special mission of reconciliation in our own land, and a special agency in the building up of the future Church of the nation.

II. An important aspect of this work of reconciliation is suggested by the alienation of many intellectual and educated men from Christianity. Very much that might be said on this point would apply to the whole Christian body as well as to any one particular Church, but there are certain respects in which I think our own Church will be seen to

l'église anglicane, qui nous touche d'une main, touche de l'autre ceux que nous ne pouvons toucher ; et quoique, sous un certain point de vue, elle soit en butte aux coups des deux partis, et qu'elle presente le spectacle un peu ridicule d'un révolté qui prêche l'obéissance, cependant elle est très precieuse sous d'autres aspects, et peut être considérée comme un de ces intermèdes chimiques, capables de rapprocher des élémens inassociables de leur nature."

Considérations sur La France, Par M. Le Cte. Jph. De Maistre.

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possess special advantages for the discharge of this mission.

It is undoubtedly true that there are many minds, at the present day, alienated from Christianity, not from aversion to its moral or spiritual principles, but on account of certain intellectual difficulties with which it is embarrassed. One of these difficulties which is most widely felt and most injurious in its results is that which arises from the supposed impossibility of verifying those facts which lie at the foundation of Christianity, such as the being of a personal God, the supernatural character of redemption in Christ, and the personal immortality of man. Modern habits in the investigation of truth; the employment of the inductive method; the invariable use of verification in scientific inquiry, have led to the denial of the character of knowledge to any conclusions except those to which these methods have led. As a natural consequence men will say: 'All this that you claim in regard to religion may be true. It is impossible, perhaps, to disprove it, but, on the other hand, it

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is impossible to prove it, and we cannot be asked to assert our belief in regard to a subject of which we have no knowledge, and are incompetent, therefore, either to affirm or deny.' This agnosticism, this denial of the possibility of any knowledge of the infinite and the absolute, stands, therefore, an apparently insuperable barrier to the simplest and most fundamental conceptions in religion.

The removal of this difficulty, and the reconciliation of such men to Christianity, must be accomplished by different methods from those too often employed. To meet this agnosticism by fierce denunciation and a denial to it of any rational or legitimate character, to treat those who avow it as if they were morally bad as well as intellectually astray, is a mistake of the most dangerous character. There is a certain truth in this position, which, if we are bold and honest, we shall not fail to recognize. To recognize it boldly and honestly is the first step toward the removal of the difficulty by which it is attended.

Suppose, then, that we have recognized the

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value of the scientific method, and admitted that the purely intellectual processes by which it is sought to establish the fundamental principles of religion are not followed by the same kind of assurance that attends a result in the physical sciences reached by the inductive method. Suppose, further, that we have admitted that, until some satisfactory method for the removal of the difficulty is pointed out, the agnostic position does not seem to be altogether irrational. We are then prepared to take a ground where we can secure for religion all the certitude to be desired, and from which it is impossible that we can be dislodged.

For when we have admitted all this, which we are honestly bound to admit, we can assert, without fear of reasonable denial, that certitude is possible in regard to certain matters where verification is impossible; that in certain respects where we cannot verify we are bound to believe, and that the fundamental principles of religion are of this character. Take, for instance, our certitude in regard to the actual existence of a past, such as we re-

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member it, or as it has been certified to us by the memory of others. This is a conclusion which has not been reached by the inductive method. It is not susceptible of verification, and yet we are compelled to believe it by the very structure of our minds. The same is true of the fact of our personal identity and of the continuity of nature. A certainty which excludes the possibility of doubt is not attainable even by the scientific method. It is simply a conviction engendered by a very high degree of probability. Just such a sort of probability attaches itself to the fundamental principles of religion. The universal tendency of the mind to believe in these invests them with a very high degree of probability. But then, further than this, the testimony of certain faculties of our nature, which are most valuable in the search after this class of truths, contributes to the certitude we seek. The moral sense, which is a fact as much as any other, demands this result, and those affections which the moral sense declares to be the best and noblest element in us, when allowed

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to exercise their influence upon the mind, lead to these fundamental principles of religion.

This brings us to a point of great practical importance in the consideration of this subject. We have found that there is a kind of certitude which is intuitive in its character. We intuitively believe in the reality of our past, in our personal identity at different times, and in the continuity of nature. We have similar intuitions in regard to the fundamental principles of religion, but with this difference, that in the case of religion there is the added testimony of the moral state and the affections. Thus the existence of a personal God, with the attribute of infinite goodness, is probably not susceptible of proof by the scientific method; but we have an intuitive conviction of its truth, and in a state of the affections which the moral sense pronounces to be good, we believe it as a matter of course.

This ministry of the affections, in the search for truth, has deeply impressed the minds of the profoundest philosophers. Pascal has beautifully said:

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"Divine things are infinitely above nature, and God only can place them in the soul. He has designed that they should pass from the heart into the head, and not from the head into the heart, and so as it is necessary to know human things in order to love them, it is necessary to love divine things in order to know them."

The same truth has been gracefully expressed by the present Archbishop of Dublin, when he says,

"To halls of heavenly truth admission wouldst thou win?
Oft knowledge stands without, while love may enter in."

These ideas, I am aware, have given rise, in some cases, to an extravagant mystical theology, but, foreign as the whole system of mysticism is to our present mode of thinking, there is good reason to believe that the mystical apprehension of truth is an essential element in a complete system of philosophy, and that, while a theology founded merely upon intellect and logic, or merely upon feeling and intuition, will be defective, one that is wisely compounded of both elements will be symmetrical and complete in the harmony and fulness of truth.

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We may depend upon it that this age, hard and materialistic as it is, is just in a condition to respond to this presentation of the ministry of the affections in the apprehension of truth. Frederick Robertson, with his acute sense of what is most profound in human nature, says that 'men find a relief from the materialism to which they feel themselves compelled in science, in the mystical element in the poetry of Tennyson and Browning.' Show men that there are paths of sentiment and affection which lead to heritages of truth, assured to them, by Catholic consent and tradition, as divinely communicated to the world, and many a choice spirit will be won from the darkness of doubt and unbelief, and reconciled to faith in God, in Christ, and the eternal life.

The attitude of the clergy in reference to the results of scientific inquiry is of very great importance in this connection. Men, for the most part, receive their impressions of Christianity from the representations of the clergy, and thus Christianity is oftentimes held responsible for the misapprehensions of its advo-

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cates. The clergy, as a class, are exceedingly averse to any modifications of their views of truth, not unnaturally, perhaps, confounding their views of truth with truth itself. It is too often forgotten that theology is a progressive science; that while there is no change in the facts upon which it is based, there is a very great change in the mode in which those facts are apprehended and expressed. One of the principal agencies by which this modification and change are brought about is scientific investigation, and its result in a knowledge of the works of God. This knowledge renders certain theological views, which formerly were held, without disquietude, absolutely unendurable. Happily the dogmatic statements of the Church, which are to be regarded as practically unchangeable, are very few, and relate only to the fundamental facts of the Christian religion. All doctrinal statements outside of the doctrinal basis of the Church, however logically they may seem to be deduced from it, are properly liable to modification in each age. The discoveries which each generation

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makes as to the facts and laws of nature, the more thorough knowledge of history, the study of comparative philology and theology, all furnish us with keys to various treasure-houses of divine truth. They open to us new revelations of the being and attributes of God. The recognition of this, and an attitude of encouragement toward the freest scientific inquiry, would do much to remove those prejudices of scientific men toward Christianity which are the result of the prejudices of Christian men against science.

I feel no hesitation in urging, in the interest of Christianity, the encouragement of the freest scientific inquiry. No scientific conclusions, be they true or false, so long as they are confined within the admitted sphere of science, can impugn any statement of the universal creeds. When the man of science says that he studies nature without any preconceived ideas of how it came to exist, or what is its purpose, if it has any purpose, we say, 'Very well, we are satisfied with that. All that we ask is that you shall give us the results of your

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observation, and the benefit of your experience in the co-ordination of facts.' When he says further, 'I find in matter all the promise and potency of life,' we are very far from being alarmed as if he had discovered that the idea of God might now be dispensed with. We do not need to ask, for every mind will ask for itself, How did there come to be there this promise and potency of life? He may go on and say, 'I find nothing else there.' 'Very well,' we reply; 'what did you expect to find, or what do you suppose we expected you to find? You do not think, do you, that we are disappointed because you did not find God there? Do you not know that it is a fundamental principle in Christian philosophy that you will not find God in any or all phenomena of the natural world? Go to the full extent of your scientific methods, they will not lead you out of nature into the spiritual and infinite world. Affirm this to your heart's content, and we will re-echo your affirmation. But if you go further and say that the scientific method is the only one which leads to knowl-

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edge and truth, and since it does not disclose God, therefore there is no God, or, at all events, it is impossible for us to know that there is, then we reply, Now you have gone beyond the sphere of science, and have entered a domain which is not peculiarly your own. We have gone with you through all your scientific investigations. We are ready to admit all your conclusions. We do not care how great are the modifications which it may oblige us to make in our doctrinal views of any thing within the sphere of nature. But you have gone as far with the scientific method as it is possible for you to go. Now listen for a moment while we venture to speak of that which is inscrutable in and through nature. You have taught us wonderful truths about nature. You have not only made us understand better its marvellous beauty, but you have shown us that it is the embodiment of types, ideas, and orderly progression. We have learned of you that it is "saturated with thought," and answers strangely to powers of perception and classification in ourselves.

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Now is it not reasonable to admit that this constitution of nature gives probability to that conviction of which the human mind has in some way possessed itself, that there is an infinite mind of which nature is the manifestation? Are there not universal beliefs and aspirations which in this way find a rational explanation? Does it not enable you to give a more probable account than otherwise of conscience and the moral sense; and, as what we claim to be the facts of redemption present themselves side by side with the admitted facts of consciousness and experience, is there not such a satisfactory completeness and symmetry in the whole theory of nature and life, thus elaborated, as to make it a guiding principle of our being?'

A more wise and just attitude toward scientific theories which seem to militate against certain supposed truths of revelation would do much toward reconciling men of science with the Christian faith. These theories are, some at least of them, rapidly passing into universally accepted statements of facts. It would

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be well to remember that Christian men have had cause enough to regret their hasty opposition to theories which they have supposed to be irreconcilable with revelation, but which they have subsequently been compelled to admit to be true. This has been the case conspicuously with astronomy and geology, and the result has been a more rational theism. It would not be any stranger if some theory of evolution, toward which scientific investigation is at present so persistently tending, should be finally established, and as a result nature should come to be regarded, not as proceeding from isolated creative acts, but as the product of an uninterrupted and all-pervading divine process and agency. The effect, instead of being to remove God, in our idea of him, further from nature, would be to bring him nearer to our wondering apprehension and awe.

These thoughts in regard to the reconciliation of science to Christianity lead to a grand and most encouraging view of the ministry of science in God's providential government of

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the world. Men who devote themselves to the study of nature are laying broad and deep foundations for a structure the form and purpose of which, for the most part, they little understand. Upon these foundations they are rearing walls with giant piers and buttresses. Within are innumerable fair and majestic forms, flooded with unimaginable splendors of light. But here is a magnificent structure which it is impossible for them to finish. The crowning glory must come from other hands. It is the power of Christ alone which shall lift a Pantheon into the sky as the fitting dome of a structure made sacred by the works and word of God. For it is true of this structure also, that it is Christ "in whom the whole building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."

III. One of the most important problems of reconciliation that presents itself to our Church in this day is that which is involved in the relations we sustain to other Christian bodies outside of the Church of Rome. These bodies, for the most part, trace their history as or-

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ganized institutions back to the period of the Reformation, some of them claiming to have existed in more or less distinct form since the Apostolic age. Without stopping now to consider the question whether episcopacy is essential to the being of a Church, it may be well for us, at the outset, to recognize the fact that there are Christian communions with whom we stand in very close relations, who are to be regarded as holding essentially the doctrines of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, as having the sacraments in their essential features, as retaining something at least of the original organization and government of the Church, and as exhibiting their Christian faith in lives of devotion and works of charity. There are many, no doubt, who hold that the differences between these Christian bodies and our own Church are of minor importance, and there are others who exaggerate these differences, and regard them as making the line of division between that which possesses and that which is destitute of the essential elements of the Church. There are, however, many very

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thoughtful men in our time—and among them the well-known Dr. Goulburn, Dean of Norwich, who has presented his views very forcibly in his book on the Holy Catholic Church—who hold that whatever may be the defects of organization in those Christian bodies, which retain substantially the Nicene faith, they are to be regarded as having acquired legitimacy by existing for so long a period, and as constituting, therefore, integral parts of the Christian commonwealth.

There are also, among us, those who believe strongly in the dependence of Christian life upon the sacraments and ordinances of the Church, and who therefore, from the admitted piety prevailing in these Christian bodies, infer the possession on their part of legitimate rites and ordinances. This is a position which combines high sacramentarian views with broad views of the ministry and the Church.

It should be remembered that, whatever may be the exclusive views of individuals, the churches of the Anglican communion have never restrained liberty of opinion within the

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limits here indicated. No one view or doctrine, therefore, in regard to this subject can be imposed as obligatory upon the member of the Church.

Amid this allowable diversity of opinion, for which we have reason to be devoutly thankful, it may perhaps be found that there are more possibilities of unity of feeling and action than we have been accustomed to suppose. It is certainly desirable, at all events, that there should be a careful reconsideration of all the bearings of our attitude in regard to this subject.

If it is simply a question of the unconditional surrender of all these Christian bodies and the adoption of the institutions of the Church as we have received it; if these societies are utterly without legitimacy, and have nothing which they can usefully contribute to the Church of the future, then it necessarily follows that there is no attitude possible for us but that of unqualified hostility, united with the astounding claim, on our part, that instead of being simply one of the fragments (perhaps

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the nearest to the original type), into which our common Christianity has been unhappily divided, we alone are the representatives of the Church of Christ in this land, and upon us the whole responsibility of Christian institutions rests. For it will hardly be claimed that we share this representative position and responsibility with the Church of Rome in a sense in which we do not share them with other Christian bodies. The claim that the Church of Rome stands in any closer relations to us than orthodox Protestant churches is fatal to our own position as a Church. It yields so much to Rome that it takes away from us all justification for separate existence. If then we claim a right to exist independently of Rome, and yet share no representative position and responsibility with any of the Protestant churches, we do assert for ourselves the prerogative, and assume for ourselves the tremendous obligations of being the only Church of Christ in this land. It is not too much to say that any theory must be fatally defective which leads to so preposterous a conclusion.

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In avoiding such a conclusion we shall find that there is very important common ground upon which we, with the non-Episcopal churches, can stand. The pressure of the Church of Rome upon modern society will make a closer union among Christians not within its pale imperatively necessary. It is time that we carefully considered, not so much the points in which we differ as those in which we agree. Especially is it desirable that we should ascertain the original points of divergence, and what elements of the original Church have been carried on in the various forms into which it has been divided. It is the wise advice of Lord Bacon, in regard to the reformation of Church or State, to revert to their original institution and see wherein they have departed from the fundamental principles of their organization. This method of reform in the Church is historical, and regards the Church as an organization, with the germs of its future development present in it from the first. Its true growth must therefore be in the direction of germinal development.

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Its whole past must be carried forward into its future.

The present embarrassments which stand in the way of the organic unity of the Church consist mainly in the existence of several ecclesiastical polities, supposed to be antagonistic to each other. These polities are, in general terms, the Congregational, the Presbyterian, and the Episcopal. In examining the essential peculiarities of these polities, we shall find that they all existed contemporaneously in the early Church. The fundamental principle of Congregationalism is the independence of the Church in a particular place, the right of believers, in a town or city, which was the original parish or diocese, to regulate their own worship and administer their own affairs. This was certainly true of the original diocese in the primitive Church. The fundamental principle of Presbyterianism is the parity of the presbytery, but it is a parity which admits, in its original idea, of a *primus inter pares*, which approaches very closely to the idea of episcopacy, and many, not only in the Church

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of England but in the Church of Rome, have held that a bishop does not belong to a different order, but simply holds a higher office than his brother presbyters in the Church. The essential element in episcopacy is the office of a bishop, succeeding to that office by an unbroken succession, to whom is committed the general superintendence of the diocese over which he presides, and to whom certain functions exclusively belong.

Now suppose, and the supposition is made, not because it suggests any thing which may be practicable or desirable, at present, but simply in order to show what common elements there are in these various organizations—suppose, I say, that the modern diocese should come to be reduced to the primitive model, and comprise only the Church in a single city and its suburbs; suppose the principle of a larger diocesan independence were recognized; suppose that one among the presbyters were set apart for life, in conformity to a law of succession, to a particular office of superintendence, we should have a Church episcopal in

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its polity, and yet comprising the essential elements of Congregationalism and Presbyterianism. The old catholicity of organism would be restored.

Without urging this point beyond a mere suggestion of these common features of organization, I wish to say a word in regard to a matter which is of very great importance to us and to the non-Episcopal churches. I refer to the widening chasm, in our modern times, between the State and the Church. This tendency is fast rendering a Christian State, as such, impossible. It has originated, in great measure, in the fact that the Church, in our time, is, as a unit, invisible. It is a body the outlines of which are indefinite. It is wanting in organization. It can come into no relations, as an organism, with civil society. In the present imperfect catholicity of the Church it is impossible for the State to enter into relations with it. They would be relations merely with some fragments or one-sided developments of Christianity. It is not so much hostility on the part of the State to the Church

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which is leading everywhere to a separation between the two as the difficulty of ascertaining what is the common, universal Christianity, what is the Catholic Church.

Until there is the development of a higher catholicity this tendency is inevitable. It will, in all probability, proceed in our own country and the other countries of Christendom, until every tie of union between the State and ecclesiastical organizations is sundered. The Christian State as such will have disappeared. It is to little, if any, purpose that we resist this tendency. In the present condition of the Christian Church it would not be wise perhaps to endeavor to retain the institution of the Christian State. But the secularization of the State cannot certainly be the culmination of Christian civilization. Nay, rather out of the monstrous character of such a position, thus made evident, will come the cry for a catholicity broad enough for the State to stand upon. After the failures of "independent morality," and Christless philosophies, and Godless civilizations, we may perhaps make

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real to ourselves that grand unity of which Plato dreamed in the "Republic," or that still vaster and grander conception of St. Augustine in the "City of God."

The question of present practical relations with the various non-Episcopal churches around us is one of very great importance, and not to be too hastily concluded. It may serve to guide us in the consideration of the question if we keep distinctly in mind what the end is which we wish to have accomplished. This end I hold unhesitatingly to be the restoration of organic unity. Whatever relations will tend to bring about this result upon the basis of the Catholic creeds and primitive order I believe to be precisely the relations most desirable for us to cultivate. Our view of the character of these relations may be somewhat modified if we consider them from a standing-point which we are not much accustomed to occupy, and ask not what we have to contribute to this organic union, but what these other Christian bodies have to contribute. We are sufficiently fa-

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miliar with the advantages and excellences of our own system. We value very highly the historical character and unbroken continuance of the ministry of the Church from apostolic times. We attach great importance to the Church year, and to liturgical worship. The dogmatic basis of the Church, in the universal creeds, and the Church system of training, we believe to be of inestimable value in the development of Christian character. The comprehensiveness and catholicity of the Church make it in its very nature the rallying ground for all the followers of Christ. Now let us see what special gifts and graces there are in the non-Episcopal churches which they would be able to contribute to the Church of the future.

In the first place the numerical strength of these Christian bodies gives them very great importance and influence. For the most part great importance is attached among them to culture and learning among the clergy. We might naturally hesitate before entering into a comparison of our educational institutions with

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theirs. They have covered the land with benevolent organizations, and their missionary operations are to be found in every part of the heathen world. They witness also for the most part to those features of Christianity which are of the most vital importance. They have blessed, and are blessing, the world with innumerable saintly lives. It would not be difficult perhaps to enlarge upon the weak points in these religious systems ; but that does not fall in with my present object, which is to dwell upon those points in which their accession would enrich the Church of the future.

What we need very much to cultivate is a generous appreciation of these excellences to which I have referred. We shall do well to seek and value the personal relations to which such appreciation would naturally lead. There is also a large field of charitable and even religious effort in which association with Christians of other churches would secure important results without any possible compromise of Church principles. The present Church law which forbids the participation, in any ser-

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vice, in our congregations, of any persons who have not been episcopally ordained, or are not communicants of our Church, may be wise in view of all the circumstances involved. Before there was such a law, liberty of action in this matter was a liberty to be vindicated if assailed. The law, however, as it now is, must be loyally obeyed. In the consideration of this subject, however, it should always be remembered that the relations between non-Episcopal churches and our own are not embarrassed as they are in England by the fact that the Church is an institution of the State.

Probably not much more can be done at present in the direction of organic unity than to make our own Church more and more truly evangelical and catholic, and to promote among ourselves a more intelligent and generous estimate of those Christians from whom, for the time, we are separated. It may not be long before the dangers which threaten our common Christianity will become so formidable as to force us into closer relations and union. What may be accomplished in this respect by

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a deeper sense than we now have of our underlying unity in Christ we cannot now tell. May He who "maketh men to be of one mind in a house" bring this union to pass in His own good time!

IV. In order that our Church may most wisely and efficiently aid in giving form to the future Church of the nation, it is necessary that a reconciling ministry should be accomplished within its own borders, and among the various schools of opinion which it contains. We cannot expect that others will be drawn into unity with us until we have learned to be a unity among ourselves. We must start in our consideration of this part of our subject with the fact clearly impressed upon our minds that there has been an historical development of widely differing schools of opinion in the Church of England and the churches with which it is in communion. At no time since the period of the Reformation has there been so wide a diversity in any one ecclesiastical organization. In those religious bodies even, in which there is supposed to be the largest free-

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dom from authority, the limits of permissible belief are far more narrow than with us. This results from the fact that they avowedly exist for the purpose of exhibiting Christianity under some special type of it, and the presence, in such societies, of those to whom Christianity presents itself under another aspect, is not desired. To my mind this comprehensiveness is a great glory of the Church, and the recognition and acceptance of it is the first step toward the unity for which, in the midst of diversity, we are to seek.

This diversity and comprehensiveness of the Church, in which the early schools of Rome and Alexandria are recalled to our minds, does not arise from any preconceived plan for the development of the Church, but is the inevitable result of the circumstances in which the Church has been placed. It was inevitable that the spirit of the Roman Empire, to so many of the forms and to so much of the genius of which, the Church succeeded, should pass into the Christianity of modern times, and reveal itself in excess of dogma and organi-

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zation. It was inevitable that the spirit of the Greek philosophy should characterize, in these latter days, a class of thinkers in the Church who would chafe under dogmatic authority, rebel against what they might regard as too rigid organization, and contend for freedom in subjecting both the Church and Revelation to the test of human reason. It was inevitable that there should be a class of men who, starting with supreme regard for the spiritual in Christianity, should attribute to the Scriptures, in their understanding of them, an authority which they deny to the Church, and accept the traditions of their own school as more to be valued than those which have the sanction of catholic consent. It is easy to see excellences in each of these schools. It is easy to see the perils to which the unrestrained development of any of them would lead. Let any one of them be separated from the restraining influences of the Church, and it would soon run into the most dangerous extremes.

Even within the Church, and under the restraining influence exercised by the presence

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of other classes of opinion, each of these schools has, at least in the case of some of its members, and with threatening indication of wider defection, gone beyond the limits of the legitimate comprehensiveness of the Church, and transgressed the boundaries of evangelical and catholic truth. There is a latent source of error in the exclusive position of each, and it flows with ever-increasing volume through the logical processes by which the original position is developed. Each one, therefore, has in it an element of danger for the Church.

How shall they be restrained and these threatening dangers averted? is a question which has always been one of great importance; perhaps never of more importance than now. It is a vital question in connection with the subject we are considering.

The method which most naturally suggests itself, and which has been most frequently adopted, is that of repression by ecclesiastical authority. It is evidently within the legitimate province of the Church to protect itself from erroneous teaching. The only question

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is by what means that protection can best be secured. Let it be by ecclesiastical authority, through pains and penalties, if that method, and that alone, can succeed. But when we remember that we are in the first place to be certain that the teaching which we propose to repress is erroneous, and, in the second, that our attempts to suppress it by force, if it be erroneous, may not succeed, we may well pause before we proceed in that direction. History teaches us a very important lesson in this respect, especially the history which this generation has been making. The effort which has been made in England to restrain, by legal proceedings, the excesses of each of these schools in turn has been attended only with failure, and the present agitation under the Public Worship Regulation Act is most disastrous in its effect upon the Church. The attempts of the same sort which have been made in the Church in this country have been no more encouraging.

It would seem, therefore, that even if such proceedings are right in theory they are not

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practicable in the present state of public opinion. It is doubtful, however, whether they are even theoretically right, in connection with any opinions which, by a liberal construction, can be regarded as belonging to any one of these historical schools. It is not at all unlikely that the protection of the Church from false teaching may be found, after all, to depend largely upon the free development of these various schools. Each one is held back from excess by the restraining influence of the others. But if you suppress one, wholly or in part, you not only restrain the free development of the Church in that direction, but you give undue influence and power to opposing tendencies. Suffer all to work freely together, and each will prove a conservative power in the Church.

We may go farther even than this. Where we have reason to believe there is loyalty to Christ and to the Church, a man, so far from being restrained, is to be encouraged in the avowal of the opinions of any of these historical schools within the limits to which his loy-

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alty will permit him to go. If he has no true loyalty to Christ or the Church, and is only making an hypocritical pretext of it, I know of no better protection for the Church than that which is to be found in the loss of influence and power by which such hypocrisy is sure to be attended. The bold and frank avowal of convictions in regard to this whole class of subjects is of immense importance to a rich and full development of the Church. It is repressed convictions, and utterances to which there is no corresponding belief, that degrade individual character and are fatal to any robust faith in the Church.

This strong avowal of personal conviction, which I claim should be encouraged rather than repressed, is perfectly consistent with the toleration, so far as compulsory measures are concerned, of opposing convictions. They may be tolerated so far as compulsion is concerned, while they are properly assailed by force of argument. They may be tolerated, if for no other reason than that they may in that way be the more readily restrained.

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I plead for strong individual assertion of what seems to each man divine truth, and for generous toleration of similar assertion on the part of others. It is no compromise of what we believe to be truth that I advocate, but simply the according to others of what we feel to be so solemn a duty for ourselves. But there is a deeper reason still for this large and brotherly toleration. Our views of truth are very limited and partial, and while there are certain fundamental principles in regard to which we will not admit that there can be any reasonable doubt, we have reason to believe that there is a higher unity in which these apparently irreconcilable systems are found to enter harmoniously, each necessary to the completeness and symmetry of the whole.

When we have become familiar with one class of phenomena in the heavenly bodies, and learned the facts and laws, for instance, of the solar system, we are disturbed by revelations of nebulæ and binary stars. We should have expected simply the reproduction through space of what we have found so beautiful and

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admirable in our own system. But the Maker of the universe has a higher and all-comprehending unity to which all these diversities are subordinated.

May it not be, after all, that the ultimate cause of all these diversities which now so greatly disturb us, and seem so inconsistent with unity, is to be found in the multitudinous aspects of the character and work of Christ? Here there has come to us a Divine Man, flooded with the glories of the infinite, the express image of God, and men gaze with dazzled vision at this marvellous revelation and then strive to utter what they have seen. No wonder that different aspects of the splendor have flashed upon different eyes; and since no man, nor all men, have witnessed and can testify to the whole glory of this revelation of God, no wonder that it is difficult now to blend all testimonies into one harmonious representation of what Christ is and what Christ has done. Let each man to whose longing gaze Christ has manifested himself say freely, though he may say with sad imperfection, just

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what Christ, in that marvellous experience, seemed to him.

When it was the purpose of David to build a temple which should exceed all other structures, in stateliness and magnificence, he called upon the people to make their offerings for the erection of this House of the Lord. There were brought to the king, in vast abundance, silver and gold and brass and iron and cedar wood and hewn stones. When the building came to be erected, it rose, without noise of hammer, like "a majestic palm in the desert." We are called upon to bring our contributions to the building up of the great Church of the future, the visible organization of the redeeming work of Christ in our land. We are to bring to it the consecration of our lives, whatever of natural gifts of learning, or eloquence, or powers of administration, there may be among us. We are to bring to it the sacrifice of our prejudices, of our partisan spirit, of our unholy ambition. We are to bring to it glad and grateful recognition of all that others can bring. We are to bring to it

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great heritages from the past which God has intrusted to our keeping, but more especially all we have of present devotion and grace. We are to bring to it our faith in God and Christ, our hope for the future of the world, our charity for all mankind. This great temple of the time to come will be built without the touch of human hand, by the power of the Holy Ghost. It will rise amid the surrounding darkness like a vast dome of light, as when northern fires flash suddenly and silently in countless spires through the heavens. Though radiant as the luminous sky, it shall be as firm and enduring as the everlasting rock. O grand and beautiful vision of prophecy, rise in all thy glorious reality upon the longing eyes of the children of God!

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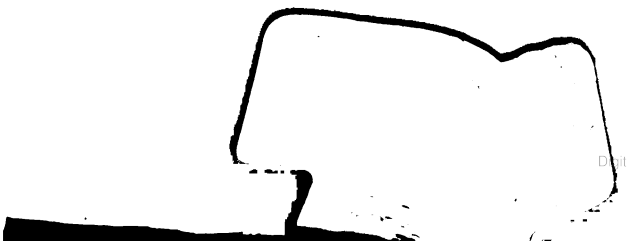
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